

## **Search for Journal articles**

J. Sumberg, Feb 2005

There are many literature search facilities available. They have different features and interfaces. Ultimately you need to find one or more that you feel comfortable with and learn to get the most from them.

Patience – persistence - creative

Today we will explore the search capabilities of the ISI Web of Knowledge, which can be accessed directly at: <http://wok.mimas.ac.uk/>, or via Metalib:

Under 'Resource Locator' enter 'ISI', and 'Go', then click on the Web of Knowledge arrow.

The 'Full Search' option allows you to select the database to be searched (Science, Social Science and/or Arts & Humanities), and the range of years (starting from 1945).

Use the General Search to.....

### **Exercise – using ISI Web of Knowledge**

Topic search (13 September 2004)

Decentralisation: hits = 490

Decentralisation and Africa: hits = 45

Decentralisation and Nigeria: hits = 2

decentralisation or decentralization: hits = 3,748

(decentralisation or decentralization) and Africa: hits = 147

(decentralisation or decentralization) and Nigeria: hits = 11

decentrali\* and Africa: hits = 215

decentrali\* and Nigeria: hits = 15

### **Exercise**

Do a topic search relating to your own research interest

Narrow the search down to around 50 papers or less

Identify a highly cited paper

By looking at the kinds of papers that have cited this key paper, see if you can come to some conclusion about:

What role this particular paper played in the development of the discussion

What role this paper played in the first author's career or research interests

# Getting the Most from Journal Articles

Jim Sumberg  
School of Development Studies, UEA  
July 2004

## Introduction

The objective of this note is to introduce the reader to journal articles, which play a central role in academic research and all DEV academic programmes. Journal articles are distinctly different from other written sources such as books, newspapers or websites. Understanding how to get the most out of a journal article, while learning something about procedures and conventions associated with them, will make your work in DEV both more productive and more enjoyable.

## Journal articles in context

Journal articles are one amongst a number of important sources of written information. Some of the salient characteristics of these various sources are briefly compared in Table 1.

## The style or format of a journal article reference

In one way or another all research builds on the work of others. It is thus extremely important to have an efficient way of referring to the published form of this earlier work.

Many different styles or formats are used to identify a particular journal article; indeed many journals have their own style. Nevertheless, these styles all usually contain the same information:

Adger, W. N., Kelley, P. M., Winkels, A., Huy, L. Q. & Locke, C. 2002. Migration, remittances, livelihood trajectories and social resilience. *Ambio* 31(4): 358-366.

Adger, W. N., Kelley, P. M., Winkels, A., Huy, L. Q., and Locke, C., 2002. Migration, remittances, livelihood trajectories and social resilience. *Ambio*, 31:358-366 pp.

Adger, W. N., Kelley, P. M., Winkels, A., Huy, L. Q., and Locke, C. (2002). Migration, remittances, livelihood trajectories and social resilience. *Ambio* **31**, 358-366.

ADGER, W. N., KELLEY, P. M., WINKELS, A., HUY, L. Q., AND LOCKE, C. Migration, remittances, livelihood trajectories and social resilience. *Ambio* 31: 358-66.

**NB:** For your own work (essays, dissertation and thesis) find one reference style you are comfortable with, and stick with it. Consistency is important!

Table 1. Comparison of some common sources of written information.

Type	Description	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Journal articles</b>				
<b>Research articles</b>	- Primary channel for publication of theoretical and empirical research findings.	Freidberg, S. 2003. French beans for the masses: a modern historical geography of food in Burkina Faso. <i>Journal of Historical Geography</i> 29(3): 445-463.	- Presentation of primary data.  - Often contain up to date review of related literature	- May be too detailed or may assume reader has detailed prior knowledge.
<b>Review articles</b>	- State-of-the art review of a particular topic or field. Often commissioned by a journal's editors.	Mennell, S., Murcott, A. & Vanotterloo, A. H. 1992. The sociology of food - eating, diet and culture. <i>Current Sociology</i> 40(2): 1-152.	- Provide a good overview and synthesis of an area or topic.  - Usually have extensive reference lists.	- The particular aspect in which you are interested may not be treated in sufficient detail.
<b>Research monographs</b>	- Detailed, book-length presentation of a major research undertaking.	Bennett, M. K. 1954. <i>The world's food : a study of the inter-relations of world populations, national diets and food potentials</i> . New York: Harper.	- Format provides scope for full development and exploration of arguments, implications etc  - Can provide useful insights into the research process.	- May have too much detail on a small area or limited number of cases.
<b>Textbooks</b>	- Systematic, relatively easily accessible presentation of a whole field or subject.	Germov, J. & Williams, L. (eds.). 1999. <i>A Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite</i> . South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.	- Can provide a useful, one-stop overview of theory, key debates etc.	- Can be too cut-and-dried or too elementary.  - May have insufficient depth in key areas of interest.

<b>Newspaper &amp; popular literature</b>	- News stories or feature articles.	Tanner, L. 2004. Kids' fast-food consumption up fivefold since 1970. <i>The Detroit News</i> , Monday, January 5, 2004	- Accessible and topical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May lack depth and lean toward sensationalism.</li> <li>- Journalistic style not sufficiently analytical.</li> <li>- Often poorly referenced.</li> </ul>
<b>Internet sources</b>	- Anything than anybody chooses to put on.	Petrini, C. 2004. Organic or Non-organic? Website of the 'Slow Food Movement', 24/06/2004 ( <a href="http://www.slowfood.com">www.slowfood.com</a> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easily accessible.</li> <li>- Allow you to quickly get a feel for topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unknown quality, often no peer review process.</li> <li>- Often poorly referenced.</li> </ul>

## The information components of a journal article reference

Adger, W. N., Kelley, P. M., Winkels, A., Huy, L. Q. & Locke, C. 2002. Migration, remittances, livelihood trajectories and social resilience. *Ambio* 31(4): 358-366.

Adger, W. N., Kelley, P. M., Winkels, A., Huy, L. Q. & Locke, C. = **THE ARTICLE'S AUTHORS** [this example shows a multiple author article with W. N. Adger as the 'first author']

2002. = **YEAR OF PUBLICATION** [somewhere on either the first or last page the dates of submission and/or acceptance may also be indicated. These give you an idea of the speed of the publication process, and may also be important in 'first to publish' disputes.]

Migration, remittances, livelihood trajectories and social resilience. = **ARTICLE TITLE**

*Ambio* = **JOURNAL IN WHICH ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED**

31 = **THE VOLUME OF THE JOURNAL WITHIN WHICH THE ARTICLE APPEARS**

(4): = **THE ISSUE WITHIN THE VOLUME**

358-366. = **THE PAGES ON WHICH THE ARTICLE APPEARS**

## Many journals, key journals

Thousands of academic journals are published throughout the world. For example, the *ISI Science Citation Index Expanded* covers more than 5,700 major journals across 164 scientific disciplines; the *ISI Social Sciences Citation Index* covers more than 1,725 journals spanning 50 disciplines.

Because a field such as Development Studies cuts across a number of disciplines and areas, relevant research is published in a very wide range of journals. Some of the most important journals for development studies are listed below.

### General Development Studies

- *World Development*
- *Development and Change*
- *Journal of International Development*
- *Journal of Development Studies*
- *Progress in Development Studies*
- *Development Policy Review*
- *The European Journal of Development Research*
- *IDS Bulletin*
- *Development in Practice*

## **Economics**

- *Journal of Economic Development*
- *Economic Development and Cultural Change*
- *Economic and Political Weekly*
  
- *Agricultural Economics*
- *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*
- *Journal of Agricultural Economics*
- *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*
- *Food Policy*
  
- *Environmental Economics*
- *Ecological Economics*

## **Social development and gender**

- *International Journal of Social Welfare*
- *Journal of Social Policy*
- *Gender, Technology and Development*
- *Culture and Agriculture*
- *Agriculture and Human Values*
- *The Development Education Journal*
- *Public Administration and Development*

## **Environment, natural resources and agricultural**

- *Ambio*
- *Global Environmental Change*
- *Environment and Planning A*
- *Geographical Journal*
- *International Journal of Climatology*
- *Progress in Physical Geography*
  
- *Marine Policy*
- *Water Policy*
- *Agricultural Water Management*
- *Irrigation and Drainage*
  
- *Agricultural Systems*
- *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*
- *Experimental Agriculture*
- *Land Degradation and Development*

## **Politics**

- *Journal of International Affairs*
- *Ambridge Review of International Affairs*

## **Regions**

- *African Affairs*

- *Africa*
- *Journal of Modern African Studies*
- *Bulletin of Latin American Research*
- *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*
- *Latin American Perspectives*
- *Journal of Asian Studies*
- *Asian Studies Review*
- *Critical Asian Studies*

## **The roles of journals and journal articles**

**In research:** in many academic fields journal articles are the principle channel for the dissemination of new research findings. Through the decisions of reviewers and editors, journals can play an important role in orienting or re-orienting research within a field, and in supporting (or otherwise) particular theoretical or methodological approaches. In principle the peer review process should ensure that journal articles have more intellectual and/or methodological rigour than other forms of publication.

**In education:** journal articles often provide the richest view of the current debates around a particular topic or question. They allow you to trace in detail the theoretical, empirical and methodological developments within a field over time.

Journal articles are the bedrock of all DEV degree programmes.

## **Reading a journal article**

Most journal articles consist of seven key parts.

**Title:** Should indicate clearly the subject matter of the article. The title may also give some clues as to the author's position vis-à-vis or approach to this subject.

**Authors and affiliations:** If an article has multiple authors a 'corresponding author' is often identified (who may or may not be the 'first' author), indicating who you should write to for a 'reprint' or if you have particular queries. The sequence in which authors names are listed may reflect conventions in a particular field (i.e. alphabetical), or the relative importance of the contribution made by each. There can be considerable politics—and consternation—around the order of authors' names.

Information of authors' affiliations can be useful in identifying those institutional hotspots, where particular topics, theories or methods are being actively explored.

**Abstract or summary:** Usually placed at the beginning of the paper the abstract should provide you with an idea of the context, objective, scope and argument of the paper. The abstract can be particularly useful if you are trying to decide if a paper is worth ordering from Interlibrary Loan. Reading the abstract is seldom a substitute for reading the whole paper.

**Keywords:** Keywords help you locate articles that are directly or indirectly related to a particular topic. Most index services and bibliographic search engines use the words in the article's title in addition to a relatively small number of keywords (which are usually identified by the author). The keywords are used to link the paper to relevant areas of debate, geographical regions, related topics etc.

For example, an article entitled 'The changing dynamics of rural livelihoods in Burkina Faso' might have key words such as 'West Africa', 'diversification', 'desertification', 'migration'.

**Body:** The body of the paper will usually have a beginning (introduction, context, objectives etc), middle (presentation of data and analysis) and end (discussion, conclusions, implications).

In reading the body of a paper is it important to try to identify the central argument, and to determine if the authors have succeeded in sustaining this argument.

**Notes:** Footnotes or endnotes are usually used to provide further detail, clarification or qualification relating to points made in the paper, additional referencing, or side arguments. Notes often contain hidden gems and should not be passed over lightly.

**Reference List:** This list should contain all the information that is required to locate every work that is referenced in the paper. The basic assumption is that material that appears in the reference list is in the public domain. Journals have different ways of handling references to written material that has not been published as well as information gathered by 'personnel communication'. Most journals seek to minimise reference to this type of material.

While it may at first seem like an odd thing to do, a careful reading of the reference list at the end of a paper may yield rich rewards. Reading reference lists is, for example, a quick way to identify key papers in a field or relating to a question of particular topic. It also provides a way of taking the temperature of scholarship around a particular debate: is there a lot of recent work? Is the field dominated on only a small number of authors?

If you regularly study reference lists as you start to read around a particular question or debate you will quickly develop a good idea of key papers, authors and institutions. By noting the patterns of who is

making reference to what papers you can also develop some insight into academic politics (Is there a high degree of 'self-referencing'? Is there evidence of 'invisible colleges'?).

### **Who publishes academic journals?**

Most academic journals are published either by learned societies (The Royal Society, The American Association for the Advancement of Science), discipline-based societies and associations (The Agricultural Economics Society), or commercial publishing firms (Elsevier, Blackwells, Cambridge University Press etc).

### **The process of publishing an article in an academic journal**

The process of publishing a journal article can be seen in terms of four major steps:

1. Drafts of papers are often presented at seminars and conferences and passed around to colleagues for informal review.
2. The paper is formally submitted to the journal editor.
3. The editor sends it out to 1-4 individuals ('peers') for review. The objective of peer review is to exercise some control over the quality of published material. Usually the review process is supposed to be anonymous; in practice it can be relatively easy for someone familiar with the field to identify the author(s) by the selection and use of reference material.
4. The editor considers the reviewers' comments and recommendations, and then either:

accepts the paper for publication; or,

suggests that the author(s) revise it and re-submit (which the authors may or may not accept to do); or,

rejects the paper (because it does not suit the journal; or it does not report anything new; or it does not engage with current debates in the field; or the methods and/or analyses were faulty). In this case the author(s) may decide to revise taking into account the reviewers' comments, submit to another journal...

The period from submission to the paper actually appearing in print may take from six months to as long as two or three years.

### **How important or influential is (was) a particular journal article?**

At some point you may want to gauge the importance of an individual article or the work of a particular author. In addition to the sense you develop from

reading in the field, you can use tools such as the *ISI Citation Index* (accessed through the *ISI Web of Knowledge* site via the UEA library). The Citation Index will tell you how many times an article has been referred to within the indexed journals, and will give you the full reference to each paper that makes use of the article in question. This information allows to easily build-up a picture of how influential the article has been.

Publishing a paper takes a lot of time and effort, so as an author it can be very humbling to realise that the vast majority of articles seem to be cited very few times (and then most often by their own authors!). Is this because most papers present little that is new or of interest; or perhaps because academic journals are not a particularly efficient means of information dissemination?

### **Journal status and prestige: the impact factor**

It should be clear that for most fields and discipline there is a relatively wide choice of journals within which any given article could potentially be published. However, within most fields there is a more or less shared understanding of the relative merits of these various journals; specifically, some will be seen as having higher status or being more prestigious than others. The higher status accorded to some journals may be due to the fact that they are more selective, more widely-read, more quantitative, more theoretical and so on. For the career development of an individual academic it is usually seen to make sense to try to publish in the most prestigious journals possible. This strategy can also have positive implications for the individual's school and university.

The ISI uses a number of quantitative indicators to rank journals and one of the most commonly cited is the so-called 'impact factor':

'The journal impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year. The impact factor will help you evaluate a journal's relative importance, especially when you compare it to others in the same field.

The impact factor is calculated by dividing the number of current citations to articles published in the two previous years by the total number of articles published in the two previous years.'

Taken from the website of the ISI Journal Citation Reports:

<http://portalt.wok.mimas.ac.uk/portal.cgi?DestApp=JCR&Func=Frame>)

The impact factors of various journals can be compared at via ISI Journal Citation Reports on the ISI Web of Knowledge website:

<http://portalt.wok.mimas.ac.uk/portal.cgi>